



New Castle Crier

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New Castle, Delaware

July 2007

City Council Adopts 2007-08 Budget

At a special meeting on June 22, the New Castle City Council approved a Resolution adopting the 2007-08 City Budget totaling \$5,102,517 and setting the tax rate at \$1.15 per 100 of assessed value. This was the final action to put the budget in place, after City Council members, the City Treasurer and staff met 10 times over the course of a month putting the budget together.

The City must get its budget done in this time frame, in order for tax bills to be issued near the start of the fiscal year on July 1. These budget workshops and special meetings are advertised and open to the public, however Council members expressed regret that more citizens did not attend to listen to the proceedings.

The majority of the work on the budget falls to Finance Director Marian Delaney. Ms. Delaney first provides Department Heads and others with worksheets showing current year budget information and year-to-date actual expenditures.

Requests for the new budget year are plugged in as the process progresses. Once all the requests are in, the budget is then reviewed line-by-line by Council members.

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Council members, who may make changes. Those changes are updated by Ms. Delaney and new printouts are provided to Council members at each meeting, reflecting the current data.

One of the main focal points Council members deliberated was to ensure the City continues to provide a high-level of quality services to New Castle residents and business owners. Some of the new items in the budget reflect these needs.

Even without added items, the City faces increased costs for labor, benefits and fuel. The

City tax bills are mailed by mid-July. Anyone not receiving a bill should call Marian Delaney at 322-9811.

majority of the City's employees are represented by two unions - one for sworn police personnel (FOP) and the other for remaining full-time employees outside of management (AFSCME). These contracts generally provide annual increases, effective July 1.

Premium costs for benefits are rising between about 4 and 6 percent, depending on the level plan provided to the employee. The City increased its fuel budget 30 percent for the new budget year.

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Important Notice For Trash Customers

Trash Collection Hours for the Months of July and August are changed: 6 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

The next regular City Council meeting is 7 p.m., Tues., July 10 at Town Hall

New Castle - The First Capital City!

City Council Approves Budget

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City Council approved some minor additions for the Police Department, including a program to begin replacing camera and recording equipment in police cars. The current system uses outdated technology (video tapes) and the new system will record on DVDs. Another new item in the police budget is money to paint half of the interior of the Public Safety Building, with the other half planned to be funded for the next budget year.

New items for the Finance Department include the addition of a Finance Clerk position, funded full-time for half the year, beginning in January. Two major components for the position will be cross-training and back-up relative to existing personnel and long-term succession planning. Also approved is money to purchase a new financial software package, which is a recommendation in the most recent audit of City finances.

Public Services requested to add two labor positions. These are needed to keep up with the extensive work for the many areas of responsibility which fall to Public Works personnel. The Council approved one full-time position funded for the entire year, and a second full-time position funded for the second half of the year. This brings the complement of personnel for this department to levels of a few years ago. The difference is, in the past, the City participated in a State program which provided prisoners to work along with other laborers - at no cost to the City. The State discontinued the program, and now City taxes will be supporting the two added positions.

In another personnel-related item for Public Works, the Council approved upgrading one of the existing positions of Equipment Operator to Mechanic/Equipment Operator. This will allow the City to pay for a person who not only can drive equipment which requires a Commercial Drivers' License (CDL), but who also possesses the skill set to perform many equipment repairs in-house, saving the City money on using outside services to keep vehicles, mowers and other items operating in an optimum fashion.

Public Services further requested replacement of two vehicles, one with mileage of nearly 100,000 and another with more than 110,000. The City Council approved these purchases, however specifying an option to finance the costs over a period of three years, so that the increase in this line item for the next budget year is manageable.

The Council approved added hours for staffing for the position which serves as Code Enforcement for Health and Housing. The new budget has the part-time position approved for an average of 29 hours per week (an increase in hours of nearly 50 percent), which is planned to work seasonally more hours (all summer, part of spring and fall) and fewer hours in the winter.

The overall result is that a property with an average assessment in New Castle of about \$50,000 will pay an increase of \$24 annually for City taxes. For many property owners who have taxes held in escrow, that equates to a \$2 per month increase paid along with the mortgage. People with questions about the City budget are encouraged to call the City Administrator at 322-9812, or e-mail cathrynthomas@newcastlecity.org.

\$200 REWARD

**For information
leading to the
arrest of persons
responsible for
arson and
vandalism at the
public bathrooms
at Battery Park.
Call New Castle
City Police at
322-9800.**

Code Enforcement Corner

The City of New Castle Board of Health strives to keep properties in conformance with adopted rules and codes. To report any problems or file a complaint, please call Code Enforcement Officer John Lloyd at 302-323-6081. Complaint forms are also available on the City Web site at www.newcastlecity.org.

Common summer property issues:

- Old tires laying around on properties — these are breeding grounds for mosquitoes and a potential West Nile Virus hazard.
- Uncut or poorly maintained grass and shrubbery — these can also be a health hazard as hiding places for ticks which can infect humans and animals with Lyme Disease.
- Improperly maintained pet areas can cause odors, negatively impacting neighboring properties.
- Shrubby in close proximity to homes can provide hiding places for insects and other unwanted animals.